

THE DIAMOND from the SKY

By Roy L. McCardell

SYNOPSIS OF "THE DIAMOND FROM THE SKY."

A diamond that fell in a meteor centuries ago belongs to the elder branch of the Stanley family in Virginia. This diamond goes with the title to the Stanley estate in England, that now comes to the Virginia Stanleys. To cheat a hated kinsman of both Col. Stanley has substituted a gypsy baby boy, bought from his maternal father, for the little daughter born to him. His young wife dies, the colored gypsy mother returns and takes in revenge the little Stanley girl baby raised in secret, and rears the child as her own. The gypsy's son grows up a reckless wanderer and becomes great friends with Blair Stanley, who is rightful heir. Blair is reckless and desperate and hates Arthur, but dissembles. Arthur, strangely, seems to be only a gypsy changeling and goes west under the assumed name of John Powell, taking the blame of a murder Blair has committed—Blair telling Arthur it was not murder but an accident, Arthur believing he has wronged and elevated Blair. Blair Arthur does not tell Blair he is the false heir and Blair the rightful one. The diamond from the sky passes from hand to hand, sought for its value by many, and it causes tragedy. In California Arthur becomes a millionaire and is surrounded by enemies who seek his ruin. He is injured in an accident and these enemies make a drug deal of him. Blair, supposed to be only a diamond gypsy, and Blair Stanley plot to keep Blair from Arthur. Blair takes charge of Arthur's great business affairs, while Durand, De Vaux, and Vivian lead. John Powell, the man sufficient to be as Arthur is known to wider distinction, the whole plot being to ruin Arthur morally, financially, and physically. Blair seeks Arthur's wealth and ultimately his death, that Blair may gain the diamond from the sky and the accident. Vivian also desires the diamond, as do Durand and De Vaux. Blair double crosses his former gypsy associates, Luke Lovell, and railroad him to prison. Arthur is rescued at Arthur's strange command—the plot continues their drug vultures he is using money, and symptoms of this are his hallucinations that he sees Esther. Hagar, Esther's foster mother, is slowly recovering from a blow that Blair dealt her which rendered her temporarily deranged. Meanwhile Esther's devoted friends, Quabba, a housewife, and Marmaduke Smythe, an English lawyer, seeking the heir to the Stanley estate, are her only friends.

him the old sense of affection, and mingled with it a sense of shame. Had as the brute gypsy was, there had always been something fine and tender in his regard for Esther. To injure her had been no part of all his wild plans to make merchandise of what he dimly surmised was the Stanley secret—and Hagar's!

Luke's mental processes were slow, but he was quick to realize he had been beaten time to think of how he should meet with Esther again did he wish to regain her confidence—as he now desired to do.

Luke Lovell rose from the curb even while cogitating upon these things and concealed himself behind the trees. But he could have stood plain upon the sidewalk for all he would have been seen, for Esther and Quabba, their heads bowed sadly to the dust, trudged on beside the patient pony, nor looked to right or left.

The smart tally-ho rattled on and ere long drew up before the portals of the Powell mansion, and Arthur was assisted off by his valet, friends.

Such is the power of suggestion upon a drug-weakened mind that Arthur had thrown aside all depression and worry upon

show—leads the way to Sankey's stable. With the sheriff and the acrobat go a policeman and the manager of the circus pro tem.

They have reached the stable yard in an auto just previous to the arrival of Quabba with his monkey and pony and street piano cart that he stables here. While Quabba faces Luke Lovell at the alley's mouth, the sheriff and the acrobat and others are in the stable. Sankey has been in the loft searching vainly for the diamond, where he hid it beneath the hay. He comes down the ladder and faces the sunlight from the open door, and there between him and the daylight—gleaming like a star—dangles from the hayrack over the pony's empty stall the diamond from the sky!

Just as Sankey grasps the diamond from where it had been left, unseen by Quabba, in his pony's hay, the sheriff and his party are at the door and grab the sinking stableman.

Out from the place they struggle, the diamond glittering in the sun, clutched in Sankey's grimy hand, that is in turn clutched by the others. In wrestling it from the desperate stableman, the diamond is

old friend, it would appear, of Dr. Durand, Powell's private physician.

"In fact, Vivian says Graydon to that fair charmer, 'You seem to be an old friend to everybody but me in this town.'"

Vivian smiled. She has met Graydon in the park by telephone appointment. Now that her charge has recovered, Miss Marston, who so capably nursed him, has time for her social engagements again. She must be tactful in social matters, however, as Blair is jealous and Durand suspicious. But Graydon is too good a friend to lose, according to Miss Marston's way of thinking, and unknown to the others concerned she has driven to the park and kept her secret appointment with the old roué.

"You have been cruel and neglectful of me, Vivian," continues Graydon. "But here is something in the paper that may interest you. You are crazy about diamonds, and I remember your telling me of a wonderful one that broke your heart when it was taken from you by train robbers. It was a wild story, and I cannot say I believed it. But there seems to be strange tragedies about big diamonds. Here, the paper says, is a wonderful one that caused a triple tragedy the other day at the circus."

Vivian smiled as he showed her the newspaper account. "Yes, I know," she said,

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"THE DIAMOND FROM THE SKY"

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CHAPTER XXIII.
THE DOUBLE CROSS.

"LET the coachman take the reins!" cried Durand, subconsciously changing from his careless air of a physician. "Lead a hand, Blair!" he added, as the coachman worked around from the back seat by the groom to the driver's place on the tally-ho.

Blair and Vivian, assisting as best they could, aided Durand in dragging Arthur from the box seat to the second one. Here he collapsed, murmuring, "Blair! How plainly I saw her—in her gypsy dress! She spoke to me—the hunchback fellow was with her!"

"It was imagination," said Vivian soothingly to the stricken man, as the pseudo physician, Durand, administered the all too handy hypodermic. "A touch of sun, wasn't it, doctor?"

"Yes," said Durand, in equally soothing accents. "I think it was the sun, and too much exertion. We shouldn't have let you drive, Mr. Powell; you are not strong enough yet for these things."

Blair said nothing. He could have almost pitied Arthur that in so short a time as had elapsed since his injuries his character had been so weakened from his tortures and the drugs administered that Arthur could be convinced that the evidence of his own eyes was but the phantom of a disordered imagination.

Neither the coachman nor the groom had understood the significance of their master's collapse at the sight of two gypsy musicians with piano, pony cart, and monkey, by the roadside. The coachman and groom, like the other servants at the Powell mansion, only knew their master had never been mentally the same since his injuries at the mines and his first homecoming to his new grand mansion, a battered, shattered, miserable form on a stretcher.

In a few moments the effect of the stimulating drug had calmed Arthur and he was sitting with closed eyes on the second seat, with Blair and Vivian and Durand.

A passing auto coming in the same direction moved beside the coach and the occupants called to the driver and the tally-ho party that there was a man on behind.

"He looks like a tough customer, too!" added the driver of the car.

The groom on the rear seat looked down and ordered the tough looking customer to get off. The tough looking customer was Luke Lovell, who had come back to Los Angeles suddenly determined to make an asset of his secret and blackmail either Arthur Stanley or Blair—preferably both.

Luke Lovell growled a curse back at the groom and held on. The coachman, with practiced dexterity, lashed the whip back of the coach at a signal from the groom. The thong cut Luke across the face twice before he could shield himself. But again and again the lash cut and stung him cruelly on neck and shoulders, and despite his hardness and determination to stand the onslaught Luke was compelled to let go and drop off. He limped to the sidewalk at the quiet suburban residence street and sat in the shade of a tree by the curb.

Blair him a leaking fire hydrant trickled. Luke mopped his brow and the burning cuts across his face with the cooling water. The pain slowly subsided and Luke looked about him.

Three, far off down the street, but yet distinct to the keen eyes of the gypsy, were two figures plodding by a pony stage cart. Two figures he knew as well as he knew his own—Blair and Quabba.

Old emotions, old feelings stirred in Luke Lovell at the sight. Esther, daughter of Hagar—the queen of the gypsies—Esther, whom he had always gazed upon with pride and a dull longing. She was not for him, Luke knew that. But yet there stirred in



I AM NOT JOHN POWELL, BUT ARTHUR STANLEY OF STANLEY HALL



AT THE CELL LUKE LOVELL SEIZED HIS YOUNG MISTRESS' HAND



AM I OFFERED ANY MORE?

passed almost against the eye of Quabba and Luke Lovell, who have hurried upon the scene from the alley mouth at the first sound of the struggle.

How well they know that dazzling jewel! It had been a fortune for them both, a fortune briefly held and quickly lost!

The next day the papers ring with the account of the recovery of the diamond, the aftermath of the great circus tragedy. The value of the diamond can hardly be estimated, the Los Angeles papers say. There are conflicting stories as to how it came into the possession of the dead circus proprietor. This only is known: It will be sold at sheriff's auction as an asset of the Stanley circus bankrupt.

Homer Graydon, millionaire, reads the story. Homer Graydon is old in years, but as he says, "young at heart." Wicked at heart would be the truer saying.

At her arrival in Los Angeles, Vivian Marston attracted the attention of Homer Graydon, connoisseur of fair women. Since the accident to John Powell, the newly rich young old and mining man, Homer Graydon has seen little of Vivian Marston. For it seems she is an old friend of Powell, an old friend of Blair Stanley, the young capitalist and relative from the east, now in charge of Powell's affairs. She is also an

"I was there. It was a wonderful diamond and," she faltered, "a dreadful tragedy."

But she does not tell him the diamond was the veritable gem she lost. Homer Graydon was a materialist. He was skeptical of much he saw, and he believed little of what he heard.

"He, he!" chuckled the old man. "The papers are full of wild yarns that the circus owner gave the diamond to the lady lion tamer, and the clown, her husband, told his friend, the old lion, the lady was unfaithful. The lion killed the lady, the husband killed the giver of the jewel. Then the lion pawed the bauble from the dead woman's neck and a stableman stole it. Romantic, to say the least, eh, what?"

"I was there," repeated Vivian. "I saw it all. The papers speak the truth."

"Well, if you will be a good little girl I'll go to the auction and buy this wonderful diamond for you," chuckled the old lion vivantly.

"Will you?" asked Vivian, eagerly.

"I will, if you promise to give up these 'old friends' who have recently monopolized you. Old friends? Pooh! Never mind old friends, stick to good friends—and you'll wear diamonds!"

"I will stick to good friends who get me THE DIAMOND!" retorted Vivian. "It is well enough to criticize my old friends as you call them, but they have promised me the diamond, too."

"I'll get it for you. I'll outbid them if

it costs every cent I have!" cried Graydon excitedly.

Vivian smiled at the thought of the compliment to her charms that several would bid for the diamond for her sake. Let the cost be what it may, the diamond from the sky would be hers, no matter who bought it!

Then Vivian bade good-by to Graydon and drove away. During her absence from the Powell mansion there were callers she might have recognized. The first was Luke Lovell, set and determined upon what he called "having a square deal."

Luke Lovell had encountered Blair earlier in the day and the suave manner of Blair puzzled Luke. Blair told him that he, Luke, was well within his rights in demanding a share of the spoils—Arthur's wealth.

"Call at the house," said Blair, "and kick up a row. You'll get yours, for I'll back you up."

Then when Luke had departed from the office, Blair called up the police and told them a threatening fellow was hanging around the Powell mansion evidently bent on blackmail.

Another caller at the Powell house was Marmaduke Smythe, legal representative of the estate of Stanley. He had never met Arthur Stanley, Arthur being a fugitive from Virginia when Smythe had come to notify him he was Earl of Stanley. But Blake, the Richmond detective, had given Smythe a letter to "John Powell" in Los Angeles. Blake, informing Smythe that Powell could tell him something of the missing Arthur Stanley.

As Vivian arrives and before Luke does, Smythe has called and has been admitted. Flushed with wine and enlivened with drugs, Arthur is wild and boastful. Smythe produces a newspaper and speaks of the circus tragedy and recovery of the great diamond.

Suddenly Arthur dashed down his wine glass and stood erect.

"It is the diamond from the sky!" he cried. "I will buy it at the auction. If you are the lawyer of the Earls of Stanley, listen: I am the earl! I am not John Powell, but Arthur Stanley of Stanley Hall!"

Blair and Durand and De Vaux, who were present, started in surprise at this announcement. The lawyer's jaw dropped; he stepped back a pace and fell backward over his chair.

Just then the servant announced that a rough fellow was at the door who demanded to see Mr. Powell and Mr. Blair Stanley.

The party left the library and crossed to the door. Luke had followed the butler in, and Blair and Durand without ado seized the gypsy and thrust him out.

A policeman was waiting and Luke, struggling and protesting, was thrown into an automobile and taken to the station house, the others going along as complaining witnesses.

At the station house Luke, strangely silent now, was searched.

A clasp knife and some silver coin were all that was found upon him, and then the policeman fished from an obscure pocket a small, creased, stained slip of paper. It

was a broken marble band such as are put around packages of bank notes. Printed on it were the words:

WELLS FARGO EXPRESS,
\$5000.

Over the heads of those closest to him Luke glanced fixedly at Arthur, who blanched and trembled. It was a slip of paper such as had been around the train robber treasure Arthur had come upon in the desert, funds upon which he had founded the great John Powell fortune!

It had been among the bank notes Arthur had given to Luke. It had been hidden among them and Luke had held to it when the money was gone, as evidence against Arthur, for Luke had suspected where the money had come from.

"This looks like train robbery stuff!" said the desk sergeant.

And then Durand spoke up. "I remember this fellow," he said, pointing to Luke. "I met him at a place said to be a train robbers' hangout at the mining town of Mammoth, where Mr. Powell here was buried some weeks ago."

"We'll hold him till we find out," said the sergeant. "Lock him up!"

And Luke was taken away.

By the aid of the police station messenger, Luke got word of his plight to Quabba, and asked that Esther be brought to see him.

Quabba apprised Esther by telephone. She had just received a telegram from the convalescing Hagar asking her to return to Richmond, and Esther had just wired to reply that she would come, guardedly stating that Arthur seemed to be under evil influences here and that she was discouraged regarding him.

At the station house Esther briefly explained that Luke had been a servant of her mother in Virginia for years and that she knew him to be honest.

Quabba waited for Esther. More strange company, thought the sergeant. But Lester spoke of Tom Blake, the famous Richmond detective, and the sergeant assumed him from suspicion, especially when she winces and smiled and admitted she was a gypsy blood.

At the cell bars Luke Lovell seized his young mistress' hand and kissed it, while contrite tears rolled down his bronzed cheeks. Briefly he explained what had happened.

"There is but one thing to do," said Esther. "Tell the truth. I am tired of subterfuge and deception. I am going back to my mother in Richmond. She has loved and she needs me. I cannot check Arthur at the expense of wronging any one much as I have loved him and such as others have loved him. If he has done evil things he is not worthy of further sacrifice and silence. I know Blair Stanley to be wicked, as are all those who live in luxury with Arthur. So tell the truth!"

"No, Miss Esther," said Luke huskily. "I will keep silent. They have double crossed me and I will have revenge in my own way—the gypsy's way."

"There is only one course to follow, my poor Luke," said Esther gently. "And that is the open and truthful course."

"Do not mix up in this," replied Luke earnestly. "Go back to Hagar and ask her to forgive me and forget I ever rebelled against her. I will attend to my enemies and to hers. I will not harm Arthur if I can help it, but on Blair Stanley and the others I will have my revenge for their treachery. Tell Hagar that when I can get away I shall return to her and serve her and you faithfully again, my little mistress."

Luke's determination and contrition were so evident that Esther made no further attempt to change his mind. She involuntarily blessing on the fugged gypsy and left him, convinced his loyalty to her and Hagar was what it had been before money greed had led Luke to evil courses and companions.

At the circus the auction was on. Arthur and his quondam friends were there. Also, gloved and as though just from a handkerchief, the old haw, Homer Graydon. Vivian divided her smiles impartially.

The tents, the animals, the circus equipment generally, brought a few flustered bids and went at paltry sums. Then came the event of the sale, the one valuable asset, the great diamond.

"How much am I offered, gentlemen?" cried the auctioneer.

"Ten thousand dollars," cried Arthur.

"Mr. Powell bids ten thousand," cried the auctioneer gayly. "What else do I hear?"

"Fifteen thousand!" shouted Homer Graydon.

There was a buzz of excitement as John Powell, the mad young millionaire, doubled the bid. Higher and higher rose the price proffered for the diamond from the sky. The crowd gasped as the bids went up and up, as though it were the Koolhaizer.

"Going, going—!" droned the auctioneer.

"The last call. Am I offered any more? Going, going—gone!"

(To be continued.)

Shown in Moving Pictures, Sundays Only, at the Lion Theatre